

INTRODUCTION

Eye to the Future 2020, the Maricopa County Comprehensive Plan, requires that Maricopa County adopt area land use plans to provide direction on land use decisions. Maricopa County develops new area plans as necessary for areas of significant growth. The State Route 85 Corridor is expected to experience some growth in the near future, which will create increases in traffic, use of recreational facilities, need for additional infrastructure, use of resources, and changes in land use. Growth will occur primarily in the Buckeye and Gila Bend areas and adjacent to State Route 85 as improvements to the highway are completed. Therefore, this Area Plan has been undertaken to help in the land use decision-making process.

As new development and growth occurs, refinements and changes to the plan will be required. The State Route 85 Corridor Area Plan will be periodically reviewed and updated as needed.

Plan Organization

This document is organized to follow the Maricopa County Comprehensive Plan guidelines, and includes the following seven sections:

Introduction: Describes how the plan is organized, how it should be used, a brief history of the planning area, and an overview of the Area Plan process in Maricopa County.

Inventory and Analysis: Analyzes existing conditions in the State Route 85 Corridor planning area. Plan elements are based in part on information contained in this section.

Issue Identification: Summarizes important land use and planning issues raised by planning area residents.

Plan Elements: Defines specific goals, objectives, and policies that guide growth and development in the State Route 85 Corridor planning area.

Action Plan: Outlines how the State Route 85 Corridor Area Plan will be implemented through specific strategies and programs.

Amending the Plan: Specifies the process for changing the Area/Comprehensive Plan. By design, these plans are flexible documents that can adapt to changing conditions. The amendment process highlights this and will facilitate the plan's evolution.

Appendix: Contains a glossary of terms, a list of acronyms, and other supporting documents.

This area plan identifies planning area goals, objectives, and policies for land use, transportation, environment/environmental effects, economic development, growth areas, open space, water resources, and cost of development.

How to Use the Plan

Each plan element contains a series of goals, objectives, and policies that define development standards, help formulate public policy, and guide public investment. In this way, the Area Plan serves as a decision making guide for the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of

Supervisors concerning growth and development. In addition to assisting public policy makers, it also helps private individuals and businesses make informed resource and investment decisions.

History of the State Route 85 Corridor Area

The State Route 85 Corridor has a long and varied history of human settlement that dates back thousands of years. About 300 B.C. the Hohokam, ancestors of present day Tohono O'odham Indians (formerly known as Papago Indians), migrated from Mexico into southern Arizona and settled in villages along the Salt and Gila rivers. The Hohokam, using a complex system of canals, grew cotton, corn, and several types of beans and squash. Besides farming, the Hohokam gathered edible weeds to use as green vegetables and seeds such as pigweed, sunflower, and tansy mustard for consumption. They weaved baskets and sleeping mats from the leaves of yucca, cattail, and beargrass. The Hohokam thrived in the planning area until the late 13th century, when due to the Great Drought, the Hohokams were forced to relocate to land that had more abundant water supplies.

In 1687, Father Kino traveled through the southern part of the planning area and visited with the Tohono O'odham people. He named their settlement Uparsoytas. The only Tohono O'odham reservation in the planning area is located close to the Town of Gila Bend. Historically, the Tohono O'odham farmed non-irrigation crops, relying extensively on wild crops. They farmed by taking advantage of heavy flooding following desert thunderstorms and redirecting floodwaters to channels designed to irrigate crops.

In 1775, Captain Juan Bautista de Anza traveled from Tubac, Arizona to California, passing through the planning area nearly parallel with Maricopa Road, a few miles north of Gila Bend. The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail now marks this passage. In 1858, the Butterfield Stage Line stopped at the Village of Uparsoytas. Then in 1879, a train depot was built at a point called Gila and became a layover stop for train crews. Hotels, restaurants, taverns, shops, and support services were developed for travelers at this location, which eventually became known as the Town of Gila Bend. The town has been providing services to travelers since that time.

Although Anglo farming began in the Buckeye Valley in the 1860s, the Desert Land Act of 1877 greatly increased farming by permitting settlers to obtain title to 640 acres of land if they agreed to irrigate the land within 3 years. Additionally, irrigation and agriculture production increased significantly in the early 1900s due to the completion of Roosevelt Dam and other dams along Maricopa County's rivers.

In large part, the northern portion of the planning area was established in 1886 by a group of settlers from Ohio. Malin M. Jackson, Thomas Newt Clanton, and William "Bucky" O'Neill constructed the Buckeye Canal, created the Buckeye Canal Company and the Buckeye Irrigation Company, and established a town site near the center of the Buckeye Valley. Between 1888 and 1912, the Buckeye Valley grew, and continued from 1917 to 1920 with the Cotton Boom. Electricity was brought to the area, as well as the first cotton gin. In 1915, the state highway established a connection between the valley and Phoenix.

In 1923, the Roosevelt Irrigation District was established to drain waterlogged lands created by flooding and runoff in the Buckeye Valley and surrounding areas. In time, the Town of Buckeye

was established and incorporated in 1929. Construction of Gillespie Dam and founding of the Gillespie Dam and Irrigation Company in 1923 generated 20,000 acres of cultivated land in the planning area. Today, most of the area remains devoted to irrigated farming, with crops such as cotton, feed grains, and vegetables growing in abundance.

In the early 1940s, the United States government opened the Luke and Williams Army Air Corp Fields to train World War II war pilots. Along with these bases came many servicemen and their families who settled in the area. However, most of the planning area remained primarily agricultural, yielding cotton for use in manufacturing tires, clothing, and other household goods.

Today, the State Route 85 Corridor planning area (**Figure 1**) remains largely agricultural, although industry, residential development, and support services are beginning to replace land that has historically been used for raising crops for feed and manufacturing purposes. The growth the area is experiencing offers benefits such as access to urban services, increased employment opportunities, and greater choices of housing for residents. However, growth and development are also creating problems, including urbanization of rural, agricultural, and Sonoran Desert land; increasing the cost of servicing scattered development; and increasing air pollution due to longer distances traveled. The State Route 85 Corridor Area Plan helps address these problems by enhancing cooperation between government agencies, citizens, and other affected interests, and by considering regional implications.

Public Participation

Citizen and community participation and involvement was emphasized during preparation of the State Route 85 Corridor Area Plan. Letters of notification were mailed to stakeholders announcing the start of the planning process for the State Route 85 Corridor Area Plan. Public meetings were held in the Gila Bend, Buckeye, Rainbow Valley, and Liberty areas to gather input from residents, property owners, business people, and other stakeholders involved in the planning area. Flyers, newsletters, newspaper advertisements and announcements on Maricopa County's website were used to reach other potential participants. A citizen questionnaire was distributed at the public meetings to identify and gauge citizen issues and attitudes. Numerous telephone discussions allowed planning staff to personally interact with some members of the community throughout the planning process.

Public Meetings

Open house style meetings took place during the planning process and allowed a small number of citizens and stakeholders to ask questions; obtain information about plan updates; and provide recommendations, comments, and suggestions.

Community Mailing

Approximately 330 plan notifications were sent to agencies and property owners in the study area and surrounding areas. These notifications explained the planning process and how interested people could provide recommendations and input. Later in the planning process, notifications were sent announcing the availability of the draft area plan and public hearing dates.

Other Input

Input was also obtained through telephone conversations and email messages from interested parties and from meetings with public agencies. The issues and concerns presented by the public are discussed in the Issue Identification section of this area plan.